

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus which is connected to a server along with other information processing apparatuses through a network and which is supplied with a shared virtual space, said information processing apparatus comprising:

inputting means for allowing a user to input strings of characters constituting a chat carried on via an avatar which is active in said shared virtual space as an incarnation of said user;

transmitting means for transmitting said strings of characters input through said inputting means to said server as character data;

converting means for converting said character data coming from said server into audio data; and

outputting means for audibly outputting said audio data converted by said converting means.

2. An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said converting means includes:

correspondence table storing means for storing a correspondence table in which character data are made to correspond with audio data; and

processing means for referencing said correspondence table storing means so as to convert

character data transmitted from said server into the corresponding audio data.

3. An information processing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising correspondence table updating means which, in response to a query from said server, transmits to said server an ID representing a type of said correspondence table stored in said correspondence table storing means, wherein, if said server returns an updated correspondence table in response to said ID transmitted thereto, then said correspondence table updating means stores said updated correspondence table into said correspondence table storing means.

4. An information processing method for use with an information processing apparatus which is connected to a server along with other information processing apparatuses through a network and which is supplied with a shared virtual space, said information processing method comprising the steps of:

allowing a user to input strings of characters constituting a chat carried on via an avatar which is active in said shared virtual space as an incarnation of said user;

transmitting said strings of characters input in

said inputting step to said server as character data;
converting said character data coming from said
server into audio data; and
audibly outputting said audio data converted in
said converting step.

5. A storage medium which stores a computer-readable program for use by an information processing apparatus which is connected to a server along with other information processing apparatuses through a network and which is supplied with a shared virtual space, the program comprising the steps of:

allowing a user to input strings of characters constituting a chat carried on via an avatar which is active in said shared virtual space as an incarnation of said user;

transmitting said strings of characters input in said inputting step to said server as character data;

converting said character data coming from said server into audio data; and

audibly outputting said audio data converted in said converting step.